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History of the Know Nothing Party In Indiana

By CARL FREMONT BRAND, A. M.

(Continued)

ORGANIZATION

Thanks to the efforts of that bitter enemy of Know Nothingism, the Indianapolis *Sentinel*, we have a knowledge of the inner workings of the Order in Indiana as it existed in the fall and winter of 1854.¹ A description of its machinery at this time, when it was in the height of its career, will not fit it at any other period, for it was continually in evolution. The ritual was adopted at the meeting of the Grand Council at New York City in June, 1854, and revised at the Cincinnati meeting in November.

The order was organized on the lodge system in a hierarchy of subordinate, county, state and national councils. Subordinate councils could be established only with the sanction of the state council. An authorized agent of the latter could confer the first and second degrees upon the applicants for a charter, who must be at least nine in number, and organize them into a council. For the charter the subordinate council paid the sum of two dollars to the state secretary and five dollars for the entire work of the order. Each council was designated by a name and a number. To become a member of the supreme order of the Star Spangled Banner a person must be twenty-one years of age, a believer in the Supreme Being, a protestant, born of protestant parents within the limits of the jurisdiction of the United States, reared under protestant influence and not united in marriage with a Catholic wife. Candidates were admitted by ballot; five black balls excluding an applicant from the first degree and three from the second. Each council elected its own officers, which consisted of a president, vice-president, instructor, secretary, treasurer, marshal, chaplain, inside and outside sentinels and sometimes

¹ The complete ritual, copied from the Indianapolis *Sentinel*, September 18, 1854, is given in the appendix.

a judge advocate and a number of solicitors.² The president presided over the council and had sole charge of the charter and ritual of the order, which were never to be out of his possession except when necessary for a session of the council. He was the executive head of the body and had charge of all political work in the district over which the council had authority.³

The membership was organized in degrees. All persons elected to membership were eligible for the first degree, to which admission was gained by taking the obligation of that degree.⁴ This oath was designed to control the voter, who pledged himself to comply with the will of the majority even though it conflicted with his personal preference, and not to vote for any man for office who was not of native, protestant birth. Above the first degree was the second, to which a member must belong to be eligible to office in the order, or to command its support for office in the community. The applicant pledged himself that, if elected to any public office, he would remove all foreigners or aliens from office and in no case would appoint such to any position of trust. The third degree, introduced at the Cincinnati convention, has already been referred to. Its purpose was to control the national policy of the order; to make the preservation of the Union one of its main objects.

The county council was composed of one delegate from each subordinate council within the county and an additional delegate for every fifty members. At least three subordinate councils with an aggregate membership of one hundred were necessary for the formation of a county council. The president of the county council was *ex officio* the proxy of the president of the state council in his county. Every county council was required to obtain a seal from the corresponding secretary of the state council for which the sum of five dollars was paid. The device on the seal was the American eagle.⁵

The state council was composed of one delegate elected by each county council, and each delegate was entitled to one

² Indianapolis *Chapman's Chanticleer*, October 5, 1854.

³ See appendix for Constitution of subordinate councils.

⁴ The oaths are given in the ritual in the appendix.

⁵ See constitution of state council and orders of board of officers in the appendix.

vote with an additional vote for every five hundred members within the county which he represented. The officers consisted of a president, secretary, treasurer, chaplain, marshal and sergeant-at-arms. The president supervised the work of expansion. He appointed one proxy for each district in the state, which corresponded territorially to the eleven congressional districts, and through these proxies directed the policy of the order. These proxies kept the president in touch with all sections of the state. The other officers of the state council and the presidents of the county councils also had the powers of proxies. The meetings of the state council were held annually. At these annual sessions the delegates to the grand council were elected by ballot for a term of one year.⁶

The highest body in the Know Nothing system was the grand council of the United States. This was a representative body composed of thirteen delegates from each state, chosen by the state councils, with five delegates from each territory or district. In the nomination of candidates for president and vice-president of the United States, each state cast the same number of votes as it had in both houses of congress. Thirty-two delegates, representing thirteen states, constituted a quorum. The grand council had power to fix the signs, passwords and all matters concerning the secret ritual and decided what should be the national policy of the order. The officers, a president, vice-president, corresponding secretary, recording secretary and two sentinels, were elected annually by ballot. All officers and delegates were required to be full degree members of the organization. The sessions of the grand council were held annually. The officers were salaried and the delegates received three dollars per day for their attendance and mileage. Each state, district or territorial council paid the sum of four cents per annum for each member into the national treasury of the order.⁷

Like other secret societies, the Know Nothing lodge had its own form of council procedure. This included the use of passwords, signs, grips, signals of distress, test formulae, and

⁶ See the constitution of the state council, orders of board of officers, and general rules and regulations in the appendix.

⁷ See the constitution of the grand council and general rules and regulations in the appendix.

rallying cries. There were special formalities for entering or leaving a meeting, and an elaborate initiation ceremonial. All meetings were opened with prayer. At ordinary sessions the members sat together as a first degree council. Separate sessions of the second degree members might be held after the adjournment of the first degree council. Probably there was also a third degree council session.⁸ So far it differed little from other secret orders, but the peculiar characteristic of the Know Nothing system was the fact that it sought to conceal the personnel of its membership. It tried to keep absolutely all knowledge of the order hidden from the outside world. To this end the time and place of the meetings were kept secret. The notice for a meeting was given by scattering right angled triangular pieces of paper about the streets. An inquirer would ask a brother, "Have you seen Sam today?" It was from this password that the order received the nickname of "Sam." A piece of paper of the same shape, but red in color, signified suspected danger, and the brethren would assemble prepared to meet it.⁹ The name of the society was disclosed to second degree members only. First degree members could truthfully claim to "Know Nothing" of the organization. Secrecy on every point was imposed on them. To avoid the questioning of curious outsiders, they professed ignorance of all matters pertaining to the society, for which they were dubbed "Know Nothings," in popular speech, and under that name they have been known ever since.

The political work of the order was divided between the subordinate and the higher councils. The subordinate councils were designed to control the smallest political areas. Each subordinate council in every corporate city, town or township elected one delegate, with an additional delegate for every additional fifty members of the council. These delegates met and nominated candidates for city, town and township offices. The councils had free expression so far as the instruction of delegates was concerned, but once the latter decided the policy

⁸ Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York*, 101.

⁹ "What's the matter with Sam"—The streets this morning were covered with triangular pieces of red paper, which, we believe, according to Sam's dictionary, means that there is trouble." *New Albany Ledger*, April 4, 1855. See also the *Indianapolis Journal*, April 5, 1855.

to be carried out, their decision was binding. Failure to obey would bring down the discipline of the order on the offending members.¹⁰

Likewise the county council nominated candidates for county offices. The political power of the state council was limited to the selection of candidates for state offices, and of state electors to be supported by members of the order. Candidates for congress were nominated by district councils. The constitution of the grand council gave it no power to nominate candidates for president and vice-president of the United States. When a national ticket was to be put in the field the grand council reorganized as a national convention.

The order issued no formal platform before 1855, but its objects were kept continually before the members by means of literature and speeches.¹²

Such was the organization of the order in the period of its greatest vigor. The system was designed to concentrate the control of the voters in the hands of a strong executive, so as to carry out the policy as decided by a few. How nicely it worked in 1854 has been shown. But such a system was bound to fail. The fear of the discipline of the order was in itself not sufficient to suppress individualism, and in the struggle the system had to bend and then break up altogether.

NATIONALISM AND SLAVERY

The state legislature of 1855 was known as the "Know-Nothing" legislature. because of the large number of Know Nothings in it.¹ A bill was introduced which proposed an amendment to the state constitution limiting the right of suffrage to those who were citizens of the United States, either by birth or by naturalization; but it never progressed beyond a second reading. The fear of offending the foreigners

¹⁰ See constitution of subordinate councils, Art. VIII, in the appendix. Scisco. *Political Nativism in New York*, 104-6.

¹² "The Know Nothing" is the name of a new book that has just been published. It is a story without preface, introduction, table of contents, page or chapter headings, or anything to indicate its character or subject, except the ominous 'Know Nothing'. Large editions, one after another, will probably disappear without anybody's knowledge." This article from the Bedford *White River Standard*, January 11, 1855, gives an idea of the character of Know Nothing literature.

¹ Brookville *Indiana American*, March 2, 1855.

was still too great to permit the passage of any distinctively nativist legislation.²

The Know Nothing movement in Indiana had reached its crest in the fall of 1854. As the slavery question gradually took precedence in the political world, Know Nothingism waned in importance. In vain they fought to keep nativism foremost. The discussion of the slavery question was forbidden. The Americans of the north were to stand by their brethern of the south as co-workers in a common cause.³ The anti-slavery agitation had already divided the Baptist and Methodist churches into two parts—a forcible illustration of the deep-seated hostility which already existed between the sections. It was depriving the people of all their national sentiment and replacing it with the fanaticism and bigotry of sectionalism.⁴ The third or “Union” degree embodied this nationalist doctrine and we have seen its disastrous results upon the councils in Indiana.

The Union degree gave currency to the belief that the south was rushing into the order with the hope of controlling its action. It was thought they were planning to ally the south with the native labor of the north against the immigrants who were anti-slavery in the main.⁵

From its origin the order in Indiana had been opposed to the further extension of slavery. They vigorously refuted the charge that Know Nothingism paralyzed anti-slavery sentiment. They pointed to the results of the state elections in the north to disprove the assertion. Against this strong sentiment the ignoring policy was powerless.⁶

The withdrawal of the members of Free Soil sympathies continued during the early part of 1855. A struggle ensued between the factions, the *Indianapolis Journal*, Berry Sulgrove, editor, upholding the anti-slavery policy and the *New Albany Tribune*, Milton Gregg, editor, the union policy. The anti-slavery contention was that the American party⁷ might

² *New Albany Tribune*, December 14, 1858.

³ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, December 18, 1854.

⁴ Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 211.

⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, May 12, June 6, 1855. *Fort Wayne Standard*, December 14, 1854.

⁶ *Indianapolis Journal*, February 12, 1855.

⁷ The Know Nothing organization and doctrines began to be known as the American Party and Americanism, respectively, during the early months of

gain great strength, win a few victories, even elect a president and gain control of congress, but its first infidelity to freedom would be the signal for its overthrow. Whenever the Know Nothings had fallen in with the anti-slavery current in the free states, they had been almost uniformly successful, but to array themselves against that sentiment, or to ignore the question altogether would mean an inevitable defeat. Any party ignoring the question was doomed to be ignored itself.⁸

The national Americans of Indiana were as a rule as much opposed to slavery extension as the opposing faction. Richard W. Thompson, of Terre Haute, and Milton Gregg, of New Albany, both declared they had no sympathy with slavery whatever and avowed their opposition to its extension.⁹ But they held that the great principles of Americanism should take precedence over the mere sectional issue. "One of the cardinal principles of the party in Indiana and the North," said Gregg in the *Tribune*, "is peace, prosperity and a desire to sink or ignore issues that disturb the harmony between North and South."¹⁰ Such a policy would never abolitionize the order nor would it make it pro-slavery.¹¹ The *Aurora Standard* thought the course of the American party should be, Union on the American question but on the slavery they (i. e., the different sections) must act apart.¹²

The result of the controversy was that Americanism thereafter received but a half hearted support from the *Indianapolis Journal* and the anti-slavery faction, who leaned more and more toward "straight" Republicanism. But the breach was not yet final.

American principles were freely and openly expressed as the need of secrecy disappeared. Newspapers were started with the avowed purpose of advocating Know Nothingism. The *Daily American*, started at Terre Haute, took for its motto, "Sam," brief but enormously expressive.¹³ Many other papers

1855. As the party entered national politics the need of a more dignified name than "Know Nothing" was felt.

⁸ *Indianapolis Journal*, March 27, April 10, May 24, 1855.

⁹ *Madison Courier*, March 18, 1855.

¹⁰ *Indianapolis Journal*, May 24, 1855.

¹¹ *New Albany Tribune*, May 16, 1855.

¹² *Indianapolis Journal*, June 6, 1855.

¹³ *Indianapolis Journal*, February 26, 1855.

now came out openly in support of the Americans.¹⁴ Later in the year the *Indianapolis Republican* was purchased by the Know Nothing state council with the purpose of making it a state organ. Reverend Samuel P. Crawford, a former Methodist minister of Dublin and the chaplain of the national council, was made the editor.¹⁵ In addition to the usual anti-Catholic and anti-foreign planks, the platforms put forward by these papers usually contained a specific plank advocating the extension of the term of residence before naturalization to twenty-one years, the same period of time that a native American had to spend here before he became a voter.¹⁶

The enemies of the Know Nothings attempted to imitate that feature of the movement which they had denounced as most objectionable. Early in 1855 a secret political society, popularly known as the "Sag Nichts" or "Say Nothings," was founded in Newport, Kentucky,¹⁷ or according to another account, in Ohio.¹⁸ Its object was to protect Catholics and foreigners and to secure their rights, especially at the polls.

¹⁴The list of Know Nothing papers at this time included the *New Albany Tribune*, *Vevay Reveille*, *Aurora Standard*, *Fort Wayne Times*, *Bedford Standard*, *Salem True Flag*, *Evansville Journal*, *Vincennes Gazette*, *Terre Haute Wabash Courier*, *Terre Haute American*, *Greencastle Banner*, *Rising Sun Visitor*, *Terre Haute Express*, *Jeffersonville Republican*, *Indianapolis Indiana Republican*. Moderate supporters of Know Nothingism, but now more Republican than American, were the *Indianapolis Journal*, *Richmond Palladium*, *Newcastle Courier*, *Brookville Indiana American*.

¹⁵ *Richmond Jeffersonian*, July 5, 1855.

¹⁶ Following is a platform of principles (summarized) printed by the *Bedford White River Standard*, May 31, 1855, as the universally acknowledged principles of Americanism at the time (1855). They are also markedly anti-slavery in character.

1. Opposition to all forms of tyranny over the mind or body of man.
2. Principles and character, not birthplace, are the true standard of qualification for citizenship.
3. No adherent of any foreign power, either political or politico-ecclesiastical, should be eligible to naturalization.
4. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime, should exist in the territories. No more slave States should be admitted.
5. Candidates for office should favor resisting the aggressions of slavery, popery and intemperance.
6. All officers, as far as practicable, should be chosen by direct vote of the people.
7. Persons of foreign birth should not be admitted to the ballot till they become citizens according to the Constitution and laws of the United States.

See also the *Bedford White River Standard* for March 29, April 12, May 3, June 14, October 5, 1855; *Indianapolis Journal*, May 1, July 11, September 20, 1855; for expressions of American principles.

¹⁷ *Bedford White River Standard*, May 24, 1855.

¹⁸ *Indianapolis Journal*, August 22, 1855.

Originally it consisted of foreigners, but was later joined by many Old Line Democrats and Whigs. Several such associations were formed in Indiana.¹⁹ It seems never to have amounted to much politically and the name "Sag Nichts" soon became a contemptuous term by which all Democrats were designated.

As the spring elections drew near the Democrats again made the Know Nothings their chief target. Lieutenant-Governor Willard and Governor Wright resumed their attacks.²⁰ The Democratic convention, held at Indianapolis, April 19, 1855, was known as the "Anti-Know Nothing" convention.²¹ To meet the attacks of their opponents the Know Nothings adopted new tactics. If a meeting were called to expose and denounce Know Nothingism it was drowned out by the shouts and yells of the Americans who gathered for that purpose.²² George W. Julian testifies to this fact also.

This happened in my own county and town, when thousands of men, including many of my old Free Soil brethren, assembled in an organized mob to suppress the freedom of speech; and they succeeded by brute force in taking possession of every building in which their opponents could meet, and silencing them by savage yells.²³

Such proceedings would not have taken place the year before when even the personnel of the Know Nothings was supposed to be secret, but men more openly avowed their connection with the movement at this time.

The Democrats at New Albany professed to fear Know Nothing violence in the election. Upon this plea, several of their candidates, William Weir, for mayor; Michael C. Kerr, for city attorney, and Augustus Bradley, for councilman, withdrew and left the field to the Americans.²⁴ In other cities the Know Nothings seem to have repeated their tactics of the previous year. Tickets were formed in secret conclave, renominated by fusion conventions and put out under the name of People's tickets.²⁵ Fusionists not in sympathy with the

¹⁹ Bedford *White River Standard*, April 19, 1855. New Albany *Ledger*, May 30, 1855. Indianapolis *Journal*, June 6, 1855.

²⁰ Indianapolis *Journal*, February 23, 1855.

²¹ Bedford *White River Standard*, April 19, 1855.

²² New Albany *Ledger*, June 6, 1855.

²³ Julian, *Recollections*, 142.

²⁴ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, April 20, 26, 1855.

²⁵ Richmond *Jeffersonian*, March 29, April 12, 1855.

Know Nothings might remonstrate against such dictation, but the latter were too strong for them.²⁶

As in 1854 no straight American tickets seem to have been nominated. But their relation to the People's party was clearly recognized, so that their victories were referred to indiscriminately as Know Nothing, Fusion or Republican successes. In the township election at Indianapolis the Fusion ticket was successful and the result was made known by the jubilant use of the pass word, "Have you seen Sam?"²⁷ A few weeks later their city ticket was defeated. "'Sam' must have been out picnicing."²⁸ The result was heralded as a Know Nothing defeat.²⁹ But the council was American, which caused it to be known as the Know Nothing council.³⁰

The Know Nothings, i. e., People's Party, carried New Albany and Richmond without opposition. There was little interest there for "Sams" reserved his strength for great occasions.³¹ "Sam's" ticket carried Terre Haute, Jeffersonville, Lawrenceburg, Lafayette, Logansport, Vevay, Greencastle, Laporte and other cities.³² "The Republicans gained over their vote of last fall. Our old line friends will learn by this that Sam is again convalescent."³³ The Democrats were successful at Evansville, Fort Wayne, Columbus, Madison and Rushville.³⁴ A curious feature of the Lawrenceburg election was that the Know Nothings supported and elected an Englishman and a German to office. This event was taken to prove that Know Nothingism was not proscriptive of all foreigners.³⁵

The Americans seemed to be sweeping the country. New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky and the southern states were the

²⁶ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, May 4, 1855. Indianapolis *Journal*, May 3, 1855.

²⁷ Indianapolis *Journal*, April 3, 1855.

²⁸ Madison *Courier*, May 9, 1855.

²⁹ New York *Times*, May 4, 1855.

³⁰ Indianapolis *Journal*, January 18, 1858.

³¹ Indianapolis *Journal*, May 4, 1855.

³² Indianapolis *Indiana Republican*, May 10, 1855. Bedford *White River Standard*, April 12, 19, 1855. Indianapolis *Sentinel*, April 10, 18, May 4, 7, 1855. Princeton *Democratic Clarion*, April 14, 1855. New Albany *Tribune*, April 10, May 9, 1855. New Albany *Ledger*, April 3, May 9, 16, 1855.

³³ Rushville *Republican*, May 9, 1855.

³⁴ New Albany *Ledger*, April 3, May 16, 1855. Rockport *Democrat*, April 21, 1855.

³⁵ New Albany *Tribune*, April 10, 1855.

scenes of Know Nothing success in state or municipal elections. Attention then centered on the Virginia election in May. Henry A. Wise, Democratic candidate for governor, made Know Nothingism the issue, and after a vigorous campaign defeated Flourney, the Know Nothing candidate.³⁶ This election marked the high tide of Know Nothingism. Uniformly successful until that time, it was the first of a series of defeats from which the movement never recovered. It was seen that the party in the south possessed only the old Whig strength, and in reality was little more than that party in disguise. The news of Wise's victory elated the Democracy of Indiana. Jollification meetings were held and the Know Nothings had recourse to their tactics of drowning them out by shouts and yells.³⁷ To show that they were not disheartened the Know Nothings, on May 30, held a meeting at the Bates House, at Indianapolis. Henry S. Lane, Godlove S. Orth, Solomon Meredith, Daniel Mace, Schuyler Colfax, Samuel W. Parker, David Kilgore and Erasmus Collins, the secretary of state, were the speakers. "Sam" in Indiana was not dead as a result of the Virginia election.³⁸

Throughout the north the order was under the control of anti-slavery men, just as it was pro-slavery in the south. It was foreseen that there would be a clash at the next session of the national council, which met in Philadelphia, June 5, 1855. Every state in the union, also the District of Columbia and the territory of Minnesota were represented, most of them by a full delegation of seven. For Indiana, appeared Godlove S. Orth, of Lafayette, the president of the order in Indiana; James R. M. Bryant, of Williamsport; J. S. Harvey, of Indianapolis; T. D. Allen; Thomas C. Slaughter, of Corydon; Schuyler Colfax,³⁹ of South Bend; and Will Cumbback, of

³⁶ *Indianapolis Journal*, May 29, 1855.

³⁷ *New Albany Ledger*, June 6, 1855.

³⁸ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, June 1, 1855. *New Albany Ledger* June 6, 1855.

³⁹ Colfax, like many others, afterwards maintained that he was never a member of the Know Nothing organization. But in a letter dated July 3, 1855, to him from E. W. Jackson of Concord, N. H., the following passage occurs: "You did not seek or solicit an initiation, but as I was authorized to do, I proffered to give you the 'work' and on your pledge of secrecy did so." Then, too, only third degree members could be admitted to national councils. Colfax concurred in many Know Nothing doctrines, but disapproved of secrecy, and of making a man's birthplace a test of his Americanism. He was selected as a delegate to the council without his knowledge or consent. He wrote his wife

Greensburg. In all there were about one hundred fifty delegates. The District of Columbia voted as a state, equalizing the sections, sixteen to sixteen..⁴⁰

There was a struggle over the admission of the delegations from Massachusetts and Louisiana, the former because of its Free Soil tendencies and the latter because it consisted largely of Catholics. The criticism of the Massachusetts delegation and of Henry Wilson in particular was bitter, but in the end they were admitted. The Catholics from Louisiana were rejected.⁴¹

On the seventh a banquet was given to the members of the council by the citizens of Philadelphia, over which Mayor Conrad presided. It was to be "national" in sentiment and anti-slavery was put under the ban. Schuyler Colfax wrote, "A great banquet is to be given to the delegates this afternoon. I have been selected to respond to 'the Press', but it is to be a 'Union-saving' affair, and I shall not go."⁴²

On the eighth a sharp struggle took place for the presidency of the council. E. B. Bartlett, of Kentucky, was elected over James W. Barker of New York, who was a candidate for re-election, but was set aside for a man more closely linked with southern interests.⁴³ C. D. Freeman of Pennsylvania, was elected vice-president; J. M. Stephens of Maryland, recording secretary; C. D. Deshler of New Jersey, corresponding secretary; H. Crane of Indiana, treasurer (Orth was also voted upon); and H. N. Rugg of Massachusetts, chaplain, (Rev. Samuel P. Crawford, of Indianapolis, was also voted for.)

All looked forward to the report of the committee on the platform, which consisted of one member from each state. On June 11 two sets of resolutions were reported. In committee, that of the majority received seventeen votes; that of the minority fourteen votes. The former were drawn up by Mr. Burwell, of Virginia, and submitted by Caleb Lyon, of New York. They denied the power of congress to abolish

that he feared the order would not come up to his platform—anti-slavery and the admission of protestant foreigners—"and in that case I might better for my own sake in the future be away than here." Hollister, *Life of Colfax*, 78-80.

⁴⁰ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 5, 1855.

⁴¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 11, 1855. *Indianapolis Indiana Republican*, June 21, 1855.

⁴² Hollister, *Life of Colfax*, 78-79.

⁴³ Wilson, *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, II, 426.

slavery in the territories, or to abolish it in the District of Columbia, and they demanded that the nation should maintain and abide by the existing laws on the subject. The text of the Burwell resolution was as follows:

Resolved, That the American party, having arisen upon the ruins and in spite of the opposition of the Whig and Democratic parties, cannot be held in any manner responsible for the obnoxious acts or violated pledges of either;—that the systematic agitation of the slavery question by those parties has elevated sectional hostility into a positive element of political power, and brought our institutions into peril. It has therefore become the imperative duty of the American party to interpose, for the purpose of giving peace to the country and perpetuity to the Union. That as experience has shown it as impossible to reconcile opinions so extreme as those which separate the disputants, and as there can be no dishonor in submitting to the laws, the National Council has deemed it the best guarantee of common justice and of future peace to abide by and maintain the existing laws upon the subject of slavery, as a final and conclusive settlement of that subject in spirit and in substance.

Resolved, That regarding it the highest duty to avow these opinions upon a subject so important, in distinct and unequivocal terms, it is hereby declared as the sense of this National Council, that Congress possesses no power under the Constitution to legislate upon the subject of Slavery in the States, or to exclude any State from the Union because her constitution does or does not recognize the institution of Slavery as a part of her social system; and expressly premitting any expression of opinion upon the power of Congress to establish or prohibit Slavery in any Territory. It is the sense of this National Council that Congress ought not to legislate upon the subject of Slavery within the Territories of the United States, and that any interference of Congress with Slavery as it exists in the District of Columbia would be a violation of the spirit and intention of the compact by which the State of Maryland ceded the district to the United States and a breach of the National Faith.⁴⁴

The minority report was written by Samuel Bowles, of the Springfield Republican, who however was not a delegate. and was presented by John W. Foster, of Massachusetts. It was signed by Schuyler Colfax, for Indiana, and by the representatives of thirteen other states. The text was as follows:

Resolved, That the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was an infraction of the plighted faith of the Nation, and that it should be restored, and if efforts to that end shall fail, Congress should refuse to admit any State tolerating Slavery which shall be formed out of any

⁴⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 15, 1855.

portion of the territory from which that Institution was excluded by that Compromise.⁴⁵

The debate on the reports began on June 11; and lasted all through the next two days.⁴⁶ The north and the south were pitted against each other, and for the first time in any political convention the north stood united and firm. New York alone, because Millard Fillmore and George Law were presidential possibilities, voted with the south. Although the proceedings were supposed to be kept secret, the news of the debate leaked out and were chronicled daily by the newspapers. Henry Wilson, of Massachusetts; Will Cumback, of Indiana;⁴⁷ and Mr. Ford, of Ohio; vigorously attacked the majority report. Kenneth Raynor proposed a compromise which failed. All the Indiana delegates present voted against it. The Northern resolutions were rejected by a vote of fifty-one to ninety-two. The Southern were then adopted by a vote of eighty to fifty-nine. This victory of the pro-slavery men came upon June 13.⁴⁸

The next morning fifty-three of the northern delegates seceded and held a meeting with Henry Wilson as chairman. An *Appeal to the People*, reported by John W. Foster was adopted. It was as follows:

To the People of the United States:

The undersigned, citizens of various States, assembled at Philadelphia on the 14th of June, 1855, feel constrained under the existing state of affairs to affirm the following principles:

1st. The unconditional restoration of that time honored Compromise, known as the Missouri Prohibition, which was destroyed in utter disregard of popular will—a wrong no lapse of time can palliate and no plea for its continuance can justify, and that we will use all constitu-

⁴⁵ Indianapolis *Journal*, June 15, 1855.

⁴⁶ Indianapolis *Indiana Republican*, June 21, 1855.

⁴⁷ Indianapolis *Journal*, June 16, 1855.

⁴⁸ Following is the vote of the Indiana delegation on Raynor's proposition, the majority report and the minority report:

	Raynor's Compromise	Majority Report	Minority Report
Orth	No	No	Aye
Colfax	--	--	---
Cumback	--	--	---
Slaughter	No	No	Aye
Harvey	No	No	Aye
Allen	No	No	Aye
Bryant	--	--	Aye

From the New York *Times*, June 15, 1855. See also the Indianapolis *Journal*, June 16, 1855.

tional means to maintain a positive guarantee of that compact until the object for which it was enacted has been consummated by the admission of Kansas and Nebraska as free States.

2d. That the rights of settlers in territories to the free and undisturbed exercise of the elective franchise guaranteed to them by the laws, under which they are organized should be promptly protected by the National Executive whenever violated or threatened; and that we cannot conscientiously act with those who will not aid us in the correction of these national wrongs and who will not even permit their fair consideration and their full discussion.

3d. We further declare our continued and unalterable determination to use all honorable efforts to secure such modification of the naturalization laws, aided by such elevation of public sentiment as will preserve the true interest of the nation, and will guarantee the three vital principles of a Republican Government; SPIRITUAL FREEDOM, A FREE BIBLE and FREE SCHOOLS—thereby promoting the great work of Americanizing America.

4th. That we invoke the arm of Legislation to arrest that growing evil the deportation by foreign authorities, of paupers and convicts to our shores, and that as our National Constitution requires the Chief Executive of our country to be of native birth, we deem it equally necessary and important that our diplomatic representatives abroad should also possess no foreign prejudices to bias their judgment or to influence their official action.⁴⁹

This document was signed by the delegates of thirteen northern states: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Wisconsin. All of the delegates from Indiana signed it.

In addition to signing the *Appeal to the People*, the delegates from Indiana laid before the council the following protest:

The undersigned delegates, representing the Council of the State of Indiana, respectfully protest against the platform adopted by the National Council at its present session, and beg leave to say that in regard to the measure known as the Kansas-Nebraska bill, neither those within the Council of the State of Indiana, nor the people, have awaited the action of the National Council in order to form their opinions.

Their opinions have been formed and avowed. An issue has been made with their political antagonists, and the soundness of those opinions tested in public debate and trial at the ballot box. The edicts of the National Council, however canonical they may be, will be powerless to change those opinions or to reverse the action of the people of Indiana.

⁴⁹ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 20, 1855; *Wabash Intelligencer*, June 20, 1855; *Rockport Democrat*, June 30, 1855.

Always conservative in their opinions and actions; always mindful of the Compromise of the Constitution of the United States; ardently devoted to the American Union, they will see with regret the promulgation of a platform by this body which can have no other effect than to increase the fury or the conflagration which the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill has lighted up.

The undersigned respectfully express their deliberate conviction that immediately upon the publication of the platform adopted, the Order in the State of Indiana will cease to acknowledge the authority of the National Council; and they respectfully ask that this protest may be received as a termination of their duties as delegates from that State.

James R. M. Bryant

J. S. Harvey

T. D. Allen

Godlove S. Orth

Thos. C. Slaughter

Schuyler Colfax

Will Cumback.⁵⁰

By this protest the personnel of the Indiana delegation was first made known. The presence of some of them in Philadelphia "on business" had aroused suspicion but they could no longer conceal their connection with the Order.

On the motion of Godlove S. Orth, a corresponding committee was appointed consisting of one from each of the eleven states represented in the seceders' convention. Orth was placed on the committee as Indiana's representative.⁵¹ Most of the northern delegates then left the council.

The secession of the minority did not prevent the majority from finishing its work. Many northern members remained in their seats and helped complete the platform.⁵² This proved to be a long document in which the Burwell resolutions were incorporated as the "twelfth section", and under that name they were afterward known in discussions. We shall see the disastrous results of the twelfth section upon the order. The Union degree had caused the withdrawal of many members from the councils. The pro-slavery twelfth section now led to the formal separation of several state councils from the national council. The council adjourned June 15, 1855.

The results of the Philadelphia convention were a distinct shock to the Americans in Indiana. The firm stand of the Indiana delegates met with the approval of the party as a

⁵⁰ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 20, 1855; *Rockport Democrat*, June 30, 1855; *New Albany Tribune*, June 27, 1855; *New York Times*, June 15, 1855.

⁵¹ *New York Times*, June 15, 1855.

⁵² Text of the platform is given in the *Indianapolis Journal*, June 15, 1855; *Rockport Democrat*, June 30, 1855.

whole. They had voted against every compromise proposed with slavery and under the lead of Colfax, Orth, and Cumback won for the state the name of the "Massachusetts of her section."⁵³

Orth, Cumback, Colfax, Harvey, and Bryant, and all our delegates well merit the thanks of every true hearted friend of freedom in Indiana, for their manly and resolute action.⁵⁴

The Americans of Indianapolis met in council June 25 and passed a series of resolutions against slavery domination, approved the action of the northern delegates and endorsed the Indiana protest.⁵⁵ American, anti-Nebraska, and Republican meetings in many places expressed approval of the seceders.⁵⁶

The course pursued by the delegates from this State, to the Know Nothing National Convention recently held at Philadelphia, deserves the approbation of anti-slavery men of all parties,

ran a resolution of a Republican meeting in Dearborn county.⁵⁷

The only notable instances where the Americans seemed to endorse the platform occurred in Evansville and Jeffersonville. The American party in the former city⁵⁸ passed resolutions fully endorsing the platform, twelfth section and all, as did mass meetings in Jeffersonville and Clark county.⁵⁹

But a small minority of the American newspapers in the state supported the platform. "We are opposed to the slavery agitation in every form", the *Evansville Journal* expressed itself, "and we are therefore opposed to the course of the free-

⁵³ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 19, 1855.

⁵⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 19, 1855.

⁵⁵ Following is a summary of the resolutions given in full by the *Indianapolis Journal* of July 6, 1855:

1. Approved the action of the northern delegates.
2. Rejoiced that the North had resolved to be respected in its rights.
3. The council would adopt the policy recommended by a State or Northern Grand Council.
4. Sympathy was expressed for the misrepresented brethren of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.
5. Resist slavery extension into Kansas and the other territories.
6. The repeal of the Missouri Compromise has released the North from all obligation to enforce the Fugitive Slave act.
7. The action of the Indiana delegates was fully approved.

⁵⁶ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 4, 1855; *Rushville Republican*, July 25, 1855.

⁵⁷ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 6, 1855.

⁵⁸ *Bedford White River Standard*, July 19, 1855.

⁵⁹ *New Albany Tribune*, July 4, 1855; *New Albany Ledger*, July 4, 1855.

soilers in the national convention. And yet we do not believe in yielding to the south one iota more than she can justly and by the constitution claim. . . . The members must be united If the freesoilers will not listen to reason. . . . let them take their course."⁶⁰ The *Jeffersonville Republican* said, "In the national council Indiana was most shamefully misrepresented."⁶¹ These two organs headed a short list who followed "Sam's Banner—For the Union, the Whole Union and Nothing but the Union" and tried to create the impression that "Samuel is All Right, Wide Awake and Standing Up."⁶²

The conservative *New Albany Tribune* endorsed the platform, with the exception of the twelfth section. It refused to endorse that section because: it favored acquiescing in the Nebraska swindle; omitted any expression of the power of congress to prohibit slavery in a territory; declared congress ought not legislate upon the subject of slavery in the territories; and declared, virtually, that the act of 1850 by abolishing the slave trade in the District of Columbia was a breach of national faith.⁶³ The *Bedford White River Standard*, a stout advocate of American principles, took somewhat the same stand.

With the exception of section XII we heartily endorse it But the twelfth section shall form no part of our political creed. We can never acquiesce in the principle attempted to be established by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. We can never submit to the overbearing spirit of the South, exhibited in her efforts to carry slavery into free territory. We can never succumb to the doctrine that Congress has no right to prohibit slavery in the territories or the District of Columbia In a word we shall never yield one jot or tittle towards an acknowledgment that slavery is anything but a curse, a blight, an infamy, a shame; and our right to constitutionally blot it from our escutcheons We expect to cooperate with the great American party we desire to be left free to entertain our own notions in reference to the twelfth section.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *New Albany Tribune*, July 4, 1855; *Bedford White River Standard*, July 5, 1855.

⁶¹ *New Albany Tribune*, July 4, 1855.

⁶² *Indianapolis Journal*, July 16, 1855. The following papers endorsed the platform: *Evansville Journal*, *Jeffersonville Republican*, *Greencastle Banner*, *Vincennes Gazette*, *Terre Haute American*. See *Rockport Democrat*, July 21, 1855, and *New Albany Ledger*, July 11, 1855.

⁶³ *New Albany Tribune*, July 23, 1856.

⁶⁴ *Bedford White River Standard*, June 28, 1855.

The great majority of American papers whole-heartedly and without reserve gave their support to the action of the Indiana delegation and stood on the minority platform.⁶⁵ The *Aurora Standard* used the following plain and pointed language:

We are sorry to see such a rupture in the party; yet we cannot too highly commend the firmness and faithfulness of the withdrawing members.—They have done right; and even if their action in this matter should cause the downfall of the party they will receive the warmest thanks of Northern men. The time has come when a firm stand must be made against the aggressions of the South, and the American party may as well fall in the breach as any other. They have given us an exhibition of fidelity and firmness never before exhibited by the members of any party, and such as we could not hope to see upon the part of the Old Liners.⁶⁶

The number of such quotations might be multiplied indefinitely and no doubt they give a true expression of American sentiment.⁶⁷ They regarded the event as epoch making. The hint expressed in the above quotation that the American party might fall in the anti-slavery struggle was reflected in many other cases. It seemed as though there was but one path of duty for anti-slavery men in Indiana, and that was to stand upon the Fusion platform and labor for the success of that party.⁶⁸

The action of the Indiana delegates aroused the bitter disapproval of the south. The American party in the state was ignored by their southern brethren who spoke of it as “a rotten limb hewn off from the American party proper” by the

⁶⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 27, 1855. Other papers, that, like the *Bedford Standard* and the *New Albany Tribune*, wished to keep the slavery issue secondary to Americanism, were the *Corydon Argus*, *Cannelton Reporter* and *Terre Haute Courier*. See the *Indianapolis Journal*, June 27, 1855, for extracts from many other papers on this subject.

⁶⁶ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 27, 1855.

⁶⁷ Following is a list of papers of American-Fusion politics that supported the action of the Indiana delegates: *Indianapolis Journal*, *South Bend Register*, *Fort Wayne Times*, *Terre Haute Express*, *Lawrenceburg Press*, *Decatur Press*, *Brookville Indiana American*, *Fountain Democrat*, *Danville Advertiser*, *New Castle Courier*, *Laporte Union*, *Indianapolis Indiana Republican*, *Aurora Standard*, *Rushville Republican*, *Park County Republican*, *Lafayette Journal*, *Lafayette Courier*, *Lafayette Gazette*, *Richmond Palladium*, *Madison Courier*, *Vernon Banner*, *Valparaiso Observer*, *Randolph County Journal*, *Delphi Journal*, *Portland Journal*, *Howard Tribune*, *Muncie Messenger*, *Bedford White River Standard*. See the *Indianapolis Journal*, June 27, 1855; *New Albany Ledger*, July 11, 1855; and *Rockport Democrat*, July 21, 1855.

⁶⁸ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 27, 1855, from the *Union Herald*.

Grand Council at Philadelphia.⁶⁹ They had indeed broken the oath of the third degree by refusing to ignore the slavery question and subordinate every issue to "Unionism."

While the convention at Philadelphia was in session, that of a new movement, an offshoot of Know Nothingism, was held. Many of those Know Nothings who had been driven out of the lodges by what seemed to them proscriptive, pro-slavery, third degree movements of the party during the previous winter, had formed a rival organization known as the "Know Somethings."⁷⁰ It was anti-slavery in character and did not proscribe foreigners.⁷¹ The movement strove for national expansion and secured a foothold in several states, but failed to gain any great strength. This party held its convention at Cleveland, Ohio, June 14, 1855. Indiana was represented by H. W. Clark and Rawson Vaile, editor of the *Indianapolis Journal*, a former Free Soiler and Know Nothing. The Know Somethings hoped that the seceders from the Philadelphia convention would join their ranks, but they were disappointed. They then voted to dispense with secrecy; put out a platform in which anti-slavery, nativist, and temperance planks were prominent; and decided not to act independently in politics but with the Republican party.⁷²

A state Anti-Slavery convention was held at Indianapolis, June 27, 1855. The question of Know Nothingism was injected into the discussion by George W. Julian, who made it the chief theme of his address.⁷³ He opposed all cooperation with the Know Nothings because of their non-committal attitude upon the slavery question and denounced them as proscriptive and intolerant. S. S. Harding, of Ripley county, and Rawson Vaile replied, defending the Know Nothings against the charges. The approval manifested by the convention showed that a large proportion of those present were either members of the order or sympathizers with them.⁷⁴

In the early part of 1855, a more liberal spirit began to pervade Know Nothingism. The *Know Nothing Crusader*,

⁶⁹ *Madison Courier*, Nov. 14, 1855.

⁷⁰ *New York Times*, June 14, 1855.

⁷¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, April 24, 1855.

⁷² *Richmond Jeffersonian*, June 21, 1855; *New York Times*, June 14, 16, 1855.

⁷³ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 18, 20, 1855; *Terre Haute Union*, March 3, 1857.

⁷⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 28, July 2, 1855; Julian, *Speeches*, 113.

New York *Express*, Philadelphia *Sun*, and other American newspapers began a campaign to do away with secrecy.⁷⁵ The novelty of the mystery had worn away and what may have seemed necessary to the movement during its weakness was not needful in its strength. The order in Pennsylvania and Delaware declared for an open organization.⁷⁶ The first open meeting was held at Stuyvesant Institute in New York City. After an open declaration of American principles it was adjourned with "three cheers for the first full length view of Sam." The Know Nothings felt that one of the principal objections to their order was removed.⁷⁷

At the same time the doors were opened to protestant foreigners more freely than ever.⁷⁸ Even the Catholic test was abolished in Virginia, South Carolina, and other states. It had been ignored in Louisiana and California from the beginning.⁷⁹ The only local move toward admitting Catholics was in Knox county. In view of the three hundred French Catholics in and about Vincennes, who had always voted the Whig ticket, there was an agitation to dispense with the religious test.⁸⁰ This liberalizing tendency was reflected in the action of the next state council.

As in the previous year the state council was called to meet upon the eve of the Fusion convention. The Americans evidently intended to repeat their tactics and again secure control of the Fusion party. The convention of the latter was called to meet at Indianapolis, Friday, July 13, 1855, the anniversary of the Ordinance of 1787, for the purpose of a more thorough organization. Affixed to the call were the signatures of Godlove S. Orth, still president of the Know Nothing state council, Will Cumback, Milton Gregg, William J. Peaslee, David Kilgore, Schuyler Colfax, and many other prominent Americans.⁸¹

The American state council met at the same place July 11-12, 1855. It was generally understood that an attempt

⁷⁵ New Albany *Ledger*, March 28, 1855; Madison *Courier*, March 28, 1855.

⁷⁶ Bedford *White River Standard*, March 29, 1855.

⁷⁷ Indianapolis *Journal*, June 6, 1855; Indianapolis *Indiana Republican*, June 7, 1855.

⁷⁸ Indianapolis *Journal*, June 9, 1855; Richmond *Jeffersonian*, March 20, 1856.

⁷⁹ New Albany *Ledger*, May 23, 1855.

⁸⁰ Rockport *Democrat*, Sept. 22, 1855.

⁸¹ Indianapolis *Journal*, June 27, July 3, 1855.

would be made to endorse the action of the delegates at the last grand council and form an open state organization.⁸² Any move to endorse such an anti-slavery program was opposed by the county councils of Vigo, Vanderburg, and a few other counties where the straight Americans predominated. The Vigo county council passed the following resolution which shows the temper of that faction:

Resolved: That our delegates be instructed to vote and use his influence in the State Council, to ignore the slave question entirely, and to vote for no platform which has anything to do with the subject in any form.⁸³

The first session of the state council took place on July 11. Officers were elected, William Sheets, of Indianapolis, succeeding Godlove S. Orth as president.⁸⁴ The action of the Indiana delegates to the national council was approved.⁸⁵ Although there was opposition to the motion it was made unanimous. In the same way the southern pro-slavery platform was unanimously rejected. The council declared itself entirely disconnected from the national grand council, but although severing all connection with that body, it preserved its own organization intact and separate from the Republican party.⁸⁶ The injunction to secrecy was removed and the proceedings were ordered to be made public.⁸⁷

On the twelfth, a platform of principles was adopted⁸⁸ which liberalized the order to some extent, making it more in consonance with the true sentiment of the members in the state. The platform was extended so as to take in all native born and naturalized citizens except Roman Catholics. Further resolutions favored the restoration of the Missouri Compromise; opposed the extension of slavery; opposed any alteration of the existing temperance law; favored the alteration of that section of the constitution of the state which per-

⁸² *New Albany Ledger*, July 4, 1855, from the *Aurora Standard*.

⁸³ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 17, 1855; *Richmond Jeffersonian*, July 26, 1855.

⁸⁴ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Sept. 7, 1855.

⁸⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 14, 1855; *Madison Courier*, July 18, 1855.

Logansport Journal, July 21, 1855; *New Albany Tribune*, July 18, 1855; *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 17, 20, 1855; *Princeton Clarion*, July 21, 1855; *New Albany Ledger*, July 18, 1855; *Bedford White River Standard*, July 19, 1855.

⁸⁶ *Madison Courier*, Oct. 31, 1855.

⁸⁷ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 14, 1855.

⁸⁸ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 17, 1855; *Indianapolis Indiana Republican*, July 19, 1855; *Brookville Indiana American*, Oct. 12, 1855.

mits aliens to vote after a residence of six months and a declaration of intention to become a citizen; and refused to support anyone for office who acknowledged the existence of a politico-ecclesiastical power superior to the president of the United States. The unity of the party, and even the nativist principles were made subordinate to the question of the restoration of the barrier against the further advance of the slave power.

But the repudiation of the old national features of the platform was not carried out with harmony. In fact it was done in the face of much violent opposition. It was said that the delegates of fifteen counties seceded from the council because of this action.⁸⁹ When the result was made known, it was a bitter disappointment to the national Americans. "What right had they to absolve the party from all connection with the national council? What is to become of our pledges to stand by the Union?" said the *Greencastle Banner*. That paper regretted the course taken and claimed the abolitionists had gained control. Another Know Nothing paper, the *Evansville Journal*, predicted that the platform would help carry Indiana but would work against them in the national election.⁹⁰ The Vigo county council which had instructed its delegate to ignore the slavery question entirely and had in turn seen its wishes ignored, now repudiated the action of the state council. It passed resolutions not to follow the state council in its act of secession from the national council, but declared it would maintain its organization in support of the principles declared by the latter; and that it was tired of the whole slavery agitation.⁹¹ Likewise the American party of Evansville passed resolutions announcing its determination to stand on the Philadelphia platform.⁹² The *Cannelton Reporter*, on the ground that the abolitionists of northern Indiana were in control, discarded the proceedings of the state council "in toto." The *Corydon Argus* and the *Vincennes Gazette* also opposed the action of the state council.

The Democrats rejoiced at the new dissensions within the American party. They announced that the order had com-

⁸⁹ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 25, 1855.

⁹⁰ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 20, 1855.

⁹¹ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 23, 1855; *New Albany Ledger*, July 24, 1855.

⁹² *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 31, 1855.

pletely abolitionized itself and looked upon the secession as a virtual disbanding of the organization.⁹³

Yet the great majority of the American party heartily approved the proceedings of the state council. The opposition was confined entirely to the southern and southwestern portions of the state. The majority regarded the liberalizing of the order as a great advance, as an end of useless proscription, and the position taken on the repeal of the Missouri Compromise as a brave stand against pro-slavery dictation.

In fact the state council of 1855 marks the end of the original character of Know Nothingism in the state. The slavery question which threatened the order from the beginning had gradually broken down the nationalism of the movement. The day of mystery and secrecy was past and with it departed much of the dread and fear which it inspired. Thereafter the American party was regarded as but little different in character from the other parties. It was looked upon as conservative rather than proscriptive. The connection between the anti-slavery wing and the Republicans became continually closer, while the national or straight Americans received less and less consideration from the other factions of the opposition.

The Fusion convention met at Indianapolis, July 13, 1855.⁹⁴ As in the previous year the Know Nothings played a prominent part. Judge Charles Test, of Wayne, who had been associated with them in 1854, was called upon to preside. B. R. Sulgrove was one of the secretaries. Milton Gregg, David Kilgore, and Lucien Barbour were among the eleven vice-presidents. The principal speech was made by General Henry Wilson, the Know Nothing from Massachusetts, who had led the northern delegates in their secession from the last grand council. Although the slavery question was the chief topic of his address, he openly expounded and defended the principles of Americanism. A state central committee of fifteen members was formed upon which several Know Nothings acted, namely, J. S. Harvey, Rawson Vaile, and Lucien Barbour, of Marion county; Milton Gregg,

⁹³ *Lebanon Boone County Pioneer*, Sept. 22, 1855; *Rockport Democrat*, July 21, 1855.

⁹⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 14, 1855.

of Floyd, Solomon Meredith, of Wayne; and John W. Dawson, of Allen. A platform of resolutions was adopted. Since secrecy had been abolished in the order there was no objection to an open avowal of American principles, so the following plank was incorporated:

Resolved, That both experience and the unmistakable manifestations of a just public sentiment demand a change of the Constitution and laws of this State so as to limit the elective franchise to such persons as are actual citizens of the United States, either by birth or by a full and final conformity with the laws on the subject of naturalization.⁹⁵

At this time there was very little difference between the Indiana Americans and Republicans. Of course, the extreme abolitionists and the straight Americans never could become reconciled but both were minority factions in their respective parties. There was really no middle wall of partition between the order and the People's party.⁹⁶ The *Indiana Republican*, the Know Nothing central organ, actively supported all Republican movements. It actually treated the two parties as one and the same organization.⁹⁷ The *Indianapolis Journal*, although now identified more with Republicanism than with Know Nothingism, openly advocated a complete union, or at least a harmonious cooperation on the ground that there was no real difference in principle between them. The proscriptive features of the order had been abolished, the two parties stood together on the slavery question, and the Republicans accepted nativist principles in a mild form at least.⁹⁸ The Republicans openly proposed to make such a change in the constitution of Indiana as would prevent the voting of aliens,⁹⁹ and that policy was specifically declared to be Republicanism.¹⁰⁰ Many Republicans openly declared their adherence to Know Nothing principles but did not see the use of a political party to gain them. They believed the principles of Protestantism too sacred to Americans to be appropriated by a single party.¹⁰¹ The Republicans would gladly have the

⁹⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 14, 1855.

⁹⁶ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 17, 1855.

⁹⁷ *Indianapolis Indiana Republican*, Sept. 6, 1855.

⁹⁸ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 11, 1855.

⁹⁹ *Brookville Indiana American*, Dec. 7, 1855.

¹⁰⁰ *Indianapolis Journal*, Sept. 20, 1855.

¹⁰¹ *Brookville Indiana American*, Nov. 2, 1855.

slight barriers separating the two parties discarded and would "rejoice to see the day when Republican, Know Nothing, and Know Something can stand openly and unitedly on a truly American platform."¹⁰² Others sensed the situation more accurately when they predicted that the Republican movement would swallow up and concentrate all the opposition.¹⁰³

The Americans too were moderating in their demands. A naturalization period of five years was generally advocated, even by the *New Albany Tribune*, the "straightest of the sect", instead of the longer term of twenty-one years demanded formerly.

The order of United Americans was introduced into Indiana in the fall of 1855¹⁰⁴ A few lodges of this nativist secret society were established but they did not flourish. The order of the Star Spangled Banner itself was not able to prevent its own decline, so there was no room for a second society.

A number of great election riots occurred in 1855 between Know Nothings and their opponents, chiefly foreigners. In the August election at Louisville more than twenty persons were killed.¹⁰⁵ Although the responsibility for these acts was disputed, the Know Nothings received the blame and the Democrats made political capital out of it, throughout the fall campaign. In the press and in county conventions the latter denounced them bitterly.¹⁰⁶ Governor Wright declared before the Democratic state convention that any attempt by Know Nothings in Indiana to drive Democrats away from the polls would be forcibly resisted. A plank was put in the platform, which declared hostility to secret political societies and deplored the scenes of riot, outrage, arson, and murder caused by their members.¹⁰⁷ Governor Wright and other Democratic speakers who stumped the state made the Know Nothings their chief target.

For most of the county elections the Americans and Republicans formed joint tickets. The tickets thus constituted

¹⁰² *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 22, 1855.

¹⁰³ *Logansport Journal*, July 21, 1855.

¹⁰⁴ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Oct. 27, 1855.

¹⁰⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 8, 1855.

¹⁰⁶ *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 22, 1855.

¹⁰⁷ *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 30, 1855.

were referred to indiscriminately as Republican, People's, and American. In Wayne county the Americans nominated by popular vote.¹⁰⁸ Godlove S. Orth was nominated for judge of Tippecanoe county by the Americans and Republicans. His standing with the latter was not hurt by the fact that his name at the time was signed to the call for the next American convention. In Harrison county the Know Nothings nominated Walter Q. Gresham for clerk.¹¹⁰ A Know Nothing, William Wallace, was nominated for mayor of Indianapolis.¹¹¹ The Americans of Dearborn county showed their more liberal views, as they had in the spring, by supporting an Englishman and an Irishman for office.¹¹²

The Americans conducted no campaign of their own except in the southern portion of the state. Their demonstrations took the form of grand outdoor mass meetings and barbecues. Great rallies were held at Paoli, Corydon, New Albany, Charleston, and Seymour.¹¹³ The American orators were Colonel William A. Bowles of Paoli, David O. Dailey, of Jeffersonville, David T. Laird, Thomas C. Slaughter, and G. P. R. Wilson, of Harrison county, John M. Wilson, of New Albany, William Sheets, of Indianapolis, and General Pilcher, of Louisville. Most of them avoided the slavery issue entirely.

In the elections the Democrats were universally successful. Many counties which had given fusion majorities in 1854 now returned Old Liners to office. The American strength in Ohio, Switzerland, Jefferson, Jennings, Floyd, and some others was sufficient to give victory to the People's tickets there.¹¹⁴ It was a poor year for "Sam" in Indiana, although at the same time he was winning great victories in Massachusetts, New York, Kentucky, Tennessee, and other southern states.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ *Richmond Jeffersonian*, July 5, 1855.

¹⁰⁹ *Indianapolis Indiana Republican*, Sept. 20, 1855.

¹¹⁰ *New Albany Ledger*, June 27, 1855.

¹¹¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, Sept. 26, 1855; *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Oct. 8, 1855.

¹¹² *Bedford White River Standard*, Sept. 6, 1855.

¹¹³ *Bedford White River Standard*, Aug. 9, 23, Oct. 11, 1855; *New Albany Tribune*, Aug. 22, Sept. 12, 26, 1855; *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 10, Sept. 13, 1855.

¹¹⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, Oct. 11, 1855; *Bedford White River Standard*, Oct. 18, 25, 1855; *New Albany Tribune*, Oct. 17, 1855; *Indianapolis Indiana Republican*, Sept. 20, 1855.

¹¹⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 8, Nov. 9, Dec. 1, 7, 1855.

The committee of correspondence, appointed at a meeting of the delegates seceding from the last grand council, issued a call dated August 21, 1855, to the American party authorizing state and local councils to send delegates to a national convention, which was to be held at Cincinnati, November 21.¹¹⁶ The committee desired to see represented all who favored religious and political liberty; opposed the importation of foreign paupers and criminals; favored an extended period of naturalization; and wished for a restoration of the Missouri Compromise. It was signed by Godlove S. Orth, the member for Indiana, and by the representatives of eleven other northern states.

The purpose of the convention was generally understood to be the reorganization of the Know Nothing Order in the north upon an anti-slavery basis—to secure the consent of the states that freedom should be national and slavery, sectional. The question of presidential candidates was not to be considered.¹¹⁷

The convention met at Cincinnati, November 21, 1855. Fifty-two delegates were present from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Vermont, and Wisconsin, representing one hundred four electoral votes. The Indiana delegation consisted of seven members, J. C. Moody of Floyd county, Elias Thomasson of New Albany, William Sheets of Indianapolis, the president of the state council, John M. Dawson, editor of the *Fort Wayne Times*, A. P. Cobb, James Hock, and M. S. Robinson.¹¹⁸

The convention organized by the appointment of General Williamson, of Pennsylvania, chairman, and W. W. Dannehower, of Illinois, secretary.¹¹⁹ All were excluded from the hall except third degree members of the order. The strictest secrecy was observed but an official report of the proceedings was published daily. William Sheets acted on the committee on credentials and J. C. Moody on the committee on permanent organization. Thomas H. Ford, of Ohio, was elected permanent president, with S. M. Allen, of Massachusetts, and

¹¹⁶ Text of the call in the *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 22, 1855; *Madison Courier*, Aug. 29, 1855; *Indianapolis Indiana Republican*, Aug. 30, 1855.

¹¹⁷ *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 22, 1855.

¹¹⁸ *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 24, 1855; *New Albany Tribune*, Nov. 28, 1855.

¹¹⁹ *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 23, 1855.

William Sheets as vice-presidents. The latter escorted the president to the chair.

The question of the platform absorbed much of the interest of the convention. John W. Dawson, of the Indiana delegation, offered a resolution proposing to expunge the twelfth section of the Philadelphia platform, and substitute in its stead a declaration that slavery is not a national but a sectional issue, and must be settled as such by the states.¹²⁰ It was referred to the committee on resolutions.

J. C. Moody offered a resolution to repeal all rituals, tests of membership, etc., leaving all regulations to the organization in each. It was laid on the table.¹²¹

The committee on resolutions, of which Sheets was a member, offered two platforms, a majority and a minority report. The latter was not extreme, either of Americanism or anti-slavery. It proposed to exclude slavery from the national territories. The majority platform proposed to go into convention with the south next February and in place of the existing twelfth section, to gain the substitution of a plank calling for the restoration of the Missouri Compromise; if that failed congress should refuse to admit into the union any state tolerating slavery, which should be formed out of any portion of the territory from which that institution was excluded by the compromise. The platform further provided that: the several state councils could admit to membership all citizens who were eligible to office under section eight of the national platform; protested against coalescence with any party which demanded the postponement or abandonment of American principles; and requested the president of the national council to call a meeting of the same at Philadelphia, on the 19th of the next February.¹²²

This platform was adopted by a vote of ninety-six to eleven, each state delegation having a vote equal to its electoral vote. All the Indiana representatives voted for it. This shows the reactionary character of the convention. The seceding body was making overtures and proposing a reconciliation to those who had given them offense. To go into con-

¹²⁰ *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 23, 1855; *Richmond Jeffersonian*, May 15, 1856.

¹²¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 23, 1855; *New Albany Tribune*, Nov. 28, 1855.

¹²² *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 24, 1855; *Rockport Democrat*, Dec. 15, 1855; *New Albany Tribune*, Nov. 28, 1855; *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Nov. 27, 1855.

vention with the south would be a waste of time so far as any hope of compromise favorable to the north was concerned. The effort of the free state delegates to get back into the national council, no matter what their motive was, would undoubtedly be construed as a confession of being in the wrong and would confirm the south in refusing again. The Indiana men were in sympathy with the majority. The absence of men with strong anti-slavery principles, such as Colfax, Cumback and Orth and the other original seceders, was noticeable.

The Know Nothing organization seemed to be at the point of crumbling to pieces at the end of the year 1855. Many of the councils were disbanding.¹²³ Hundreds of their members withdrew and openly declared their connection with the order at an end.¹²⁴ The politicians who had rushed into the order to control it now as suddenly rushed out again. It now seemed probable that the organization, which in 1854 was regarded as certain to carry the state in the next presidential election, would not be able to make a respectable contest in the election of 1856. The slavery question had played havoc with "Sam's" plans.

¹²³ For example see the Indianapolis *Sentinel* of Dec. 5, 1855, for the following, taken from the Lafayette *Courier*: "Messrs. Editors:—At a meeting of the Star City Council held at the council room on Saturday evening, Dec. 1, 1855, on motion it was resolved that we surrender our charter to the power from whence it came, and disband our secret organization.

STEPHEN STAFFORD,
Secretary pro tem."

¹²⁴ Lebanon *Boone County Pioneer*, Oct. 6, 1855; Rockport *Democrat*, Dec. 8, 1855; Indianapolis *Journal*, Apr. 5, 1856; Madison *Courier*, Apr. 2, 1856.

(To be Continued.)